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SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER ON DISPUTED INTERNAL BOUNDARIES AND
ELECTIONS

Classified By: Ambassador Chris Hill for reasons 1.5 b,d

¶1. (S) In a September 22 meeting, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki told the Ambassador that he felt the Council of Representatives (CoR, the Iraqi Parliament) is no longer effective and cannot be relied upon to pass legislation. The GOI, he said, is effectively at a standstill. The CoR is not able to deal at present with Article 140 matters or to focus on a resolution of the Kirkuk issue. Instead, Maliki said, the GOI must focus on measures to "keep the status quo." He said there must be efforts to engage both sides in dialogue and confidence building measures. Preventing any fighting in the disputed territories between now and the elections is a good goal. "More than this," he said, "is not possible."

¶2. (S) Asked by the Ambassador about the proposed joint patrolling in the disputed territories, Maliki said, "That was originally my idea: joint Iraqi Army and Peshmerga patrols, with support from U.S. forces." He said he hoped to make the Peshmerga part of the Iraqi defense forces, "but the Kirkuk Arabs and Turkman" opposed it, even though they know Maliki supported the concept. He characterized this reaction as "a mistake on their part." Given the opposition to his plan, however, he agreed with Multi-National Forces Iraq Commanding General Odierno to "tone it down."

¶3. (S) Turning to the electoral process generally, Maliki noted that "there are some who do not want national elections at all," a stance he said was "dangerous" and "a threat to Iraq's democratic political process." If elections do not take place and on time, he said, the political process in Iraq will stop. Some politicians have suggested that the current government could merely remain in office, but Maliki dismissed this idea, saying that it would "paralyze government" and would leave the GOI "with no role except to pay salaries." The majority of Iraqis oppose delaying the elections, he said. If it comes to that, an election on time with a closed list would be better than no election at all, he emphasized.
HILL